

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 3-6, 8, 9, 11-15, and 17-20 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 2, 7, 10, and 16 are canceled by the present response without prejudice. Claims 1 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as clearly anticipated by U.S. patent 5,486,698 to Hanson et al. (herein “Hanson”). Claims 2, 7, 8, 11, 16, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(b) as unpatentable over Hanson in view of U.S. patent 6,031,231 to Kimata et al. (herein “Kimata”). Claims 3-6, 9, 12-15, 18, 20, and 19 were objected to as dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were noted as allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitation of their base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the early indication of the allowable subject matter in Claims 3-6, 9, 12-15, 18, 20, and 19.

The present response is submitted to place the application in condition for allowance with respect to the subject matter noted as allowable. More particularly, by the present response each of Claims 3, 9, 12, and 18 is amended by the present response to be rewritten in independent form. The outstanding Office Action indicated such claims would be allowable if so rewritten, and thus each of independent Claims 3, 6, 9, 12, and 18 is now believed to be allowable. Further, the other pending claims either originally depended from one of the above-noted independent claims or is amended by the present response to now depend from one of the above-noted independent claims. Thus, each of the claims is believed to be allowable.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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